Claims

1. A method for preparing a milk-based composition comprising a homopolysaccharide comprising the steps of

(i) fermenting a mixture comprising milk and a fermentable sugar with a homopolysaccharide producing microorganism under anaerobic conditions, and

(ii) stopping the fermentation before the pH of the mixture drops below pH 5.5,

the pH of the mixture being unregulated during fermentation.

2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the pH of the mixture remains within the range of pH 5.8 to 6.2 during fermentation.

3. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the microorganism is a dextran and/or fructan producing lactic acid bacterium.

4. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the microorganism is a lactic acid bacterium of the genus *Leuconostoc*.

5. A method according to Claim 4 wherein the microorganism is a dextran-producing strain of *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *mesenteroides* or subspecies *dextranicum*.

6. A method according to Claim 5 wherein the microorganism comprises a strain selected from *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *mesenteroides* ATCC 10830A, or *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *dextranicum* 605.

7. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the homopolysaccharide is produced in an amount of at least 0.3% by weight of the composition.

8. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the mixture is inoculated with beadlets comprising a preculture of the microorganism.

9. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermentation is carried out at a temperature of from 10° to 30°C.

10. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermentation is carried out for a period of from 4 to 48 hours.

11. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermented mixture is diluted with non-fermented mixture.

12. A food product comprising a composition prepared according to the method of Claim 1.

13. A food product according to Claim 13 which is an ice cream confection.

14. A composition comprising an ice-cream pre-mix and a homopolysaccharide-producing microorganism.